

the Diamond-backed Moth *Plutella xylostella* (L.); the latter was also noted in Bishops Stortford by Colin Plant whilst in Takeley, North Essex, Geoffrey Sell captured a Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua* (Hb.). The following night, a Striped Hawk-moth was noted in Sussex by Tim Freed (Colin Plant – personal communication); doubtless there were other immigrants that I am not aware of. The main area of residency of *acutellus* is central Europe and this does not fit too well with the expected source of other immigrants noted at the time. However, Karsholt & Razowski (1996. *The Lepidoptera of Europe: A distributional checklist*) note *acutellus* in most European countries, including France and Spain. It is, therefore, possible that the Barnet specimen was a primary immigrant.

The second explanation is rather more daring. It is based upon the fact that on some warm, humid nights, garden moth traps situated miles from the nearest marshland habitat suddenly start catching marshland moths. On the night before there are none and the next night there are none either! For some reason, these wetland moths all take to the air on the same evening and some are caught in traps. Much documentary evidence exists, but space prohibits its full presentation here. Evidence for such an occurrence on the night of 9 June 2004 is slender, but Colin Plant informs me that Geoffrey Sell captured *Schoenobius gigantella* (D. & S.) in his garden in Takeley, North Essex – a most unexpected occurrence of another moth that is also associated with reed. Could it be that *Scleroconus acutellus* is in fact already established as a resident moth in some of the southern wetland sites of England – perhaps overlooked as the now increasingly common *Nascia ciliaris* (Hb.). This is not totally beyond the bounds of possibility as the example of the Toadflax Brocade *Calophasia lunula* (Hufn.) illustrates. This noctuid is normally confined to the shingle beaches of the south-east of England, but several examples taken in moth traps in London during 2003 were thought to relate to primary immigrants. Larvae certainly resulted from some of these arrivals, including at Tower Hamlets in eastern London (also Middlesex) where several were found by Terry Lyle, and Colin Plant tells me that during May and June 2004 freshly emerged adults have been turning up in one or two places across northern London, suggesting that it is, at least temporarily, resident here.— RACHEL TERRY, 92 Woodville Road, Barnet, Herts EN5 5NJ.

### **Many-plumed Moth *Alucita hexadactyla* Linnaeus, 1758 (Lep.: Alucitidae) — extended copulation period**

That moths may spend many hours in copulation is well known, but documented records apparently relate only to larger species (Young, M., *The Natural History of Moths*, London, 1997). At 2100 hrs GMT on 2 April 2004 I found a pair of Many-plumed moths copulating on my garage window frame. They were still in the same position at 0700 hrs the next morning and remained so until 1800 hrs when they moved half a metre up the mullion. They remained there, still in copulation, until at least 2200 hrs, but had gone by the following morning. They were thus in copulation

for a minimum period of 25 hours. Young (*op. cit.*) suggests that prolonged mating may only be possible for large well protected or very cryptic species, but neither of those characteristics applies to the Many-plumed Moth.— P. J. OLIVER, The Briar Patch, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0TL.

**On the Aston Rowant record of *Ceutorhynchus syrites* Germar (Col.: Curculionidae) and another from Devon**

With reference to the appeal for information made by Professor Morris concerning the Aston Rowant (Oxfordshire) record of *Ceutorhynchus syrites* I can give a very few details. The captor was the late G. E. Woodroffe, primarily a student of Heteroptera, but also a very competent coleopterist. The site was Aston Hill and a note I made at the time indicates that he swept one example only, from chalk grassland, on 17 May 1966.

The other record is of an example from Totnes, South Devon, captured on 13 October 1925 by T. H. Edmonds, according to a note I have from the late H. Donisthorpe who, with good reason, suggested that it ought to be confirmed. As far as I know that was never done, nor do I know the present whereabouts of Edmonds' collection.— A. A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

***Meteorus rubens* (Nees) (Hym.: Braconidae) reared from Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba* (L.) (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Peterborough (VC 32, Northamptonshire)**

On 19 January and 23 January 2004 I found two larvae of the Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba* in their penultimate instar in my garden at my Peterborough address by day when collecting heads of Chicory for the table. Both larvae were 2.5 cm in length, green with black dashes, and feeding quite deep within the Chicory heads. The first one soon moulted into its final instar (brown), then the drama started. On 25 January seven wasp grubs emerged from the caterpillar and spun their brownish-white cocoons beside the caterpillar. The exit holes they made in the sides of the caterpillar were clearly visible at the hind end. The caterpillar lived for a further three days, moving about quite actively, but did not feed. It died on 28 January. The black adult wasps all emerged on 4 February, having been kept indoors. They have been identified as *Meteorus rubens* (Nees) by Dr Mark Shaw, Natural Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, with whom the specimens have been deposited. Dr Shaw reports that *M. rubens* is a widely distributed and frequent braconid wasp which mainly parasitises noctuid hosts which feed near the earth. It has been recorded previously from the Large Yellow Underwing. The second Large Yellow Underwing larva became fully grown and burrowed into the soil on 31 January and pupated successfully. I thank Dr Shaw for the identification and information on *M. rubens*. — PAUL WARING, Reader, Centre for Environment & Rural Affairs (CERA), Writtle College, Essex. Address for correspondence: Windmill View, 1366 Lincoln Road, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6LS (e-mail: paul\_waring@btinternet.com)